

For Immediate Release – County of Berks – County Statement

Exide Technologies Site Added to Superfund National Priorities List

Reading, PA— 03/19/2024 — Berks County is pleased that the years-long efforts to bring federal awareness and attention to the former Laureldale site of Exide Technologies has been heard and is seeing action. As of March 7, the site surrounding the 40-acre Exide Technologies lot has been officially added to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund National Priorities List (NPL).

Inclusion on the NPL brings a new level of funding and attention to the blighted area. The EPA will conduct revised studies identifying the current extent of soil and water contamination and conduct community outreach to create a Community Improvement Plan. The improvement plan will include the processes, stages, and the scope of the overall remediation efforts.

"The County of Berks is happy to see forward progress on the Exide site remediation efforts," said Commissioner Chairman Christian Leinbach. "This new designation represents a great step forward in easing the risk this issue has had on the surrounding community of Laureldale and the negative impact on our local economy. The county commissioners, administrators, and staff have worked for years to keep state and federal attention on the site. Being added to the Superfund NPL will greatly increase the scale of the remediation possible compared to years past."

David Hunter, Executive Director of the Berks County Planning Commission is pleased that "Planning Staff were instrumental in petitioning Governor Josh Shapiro, Senator Bob Casey and former Governor Tom Wolf and many other elected officials on the need to continue to remediate the Exide site. In addition, Planning Staff communicated with representatives from EPA and consultant Fred Osman to keep the County Commissioners informed on the effort to include the Exide site in EPA's Corrective Action Program and was supportive of the addition of the properties surrounding the former Exide facility into the Superfund National Priorities List."

On March 13, EPA staff conducted a community meeting to update residents on the new NPL designation and outline the process moving forward to analyze, evaluate, and ultimately remediate contaminated land and properties. Information on the Superfund process, current activities, and EPA staff contacts at the Exide-Laureldale site can be found at www.epa.gov/superfund/exide-laureldale.

The Exide site started as a lead battery manufacturing and recycling center in the 1930's with Exide purchasing the site in 1987. The plant continued manufacturing until 2010 and recycling until 2013. Exide declared bankruptcy in 2020 and the EPA acquired the site the same year. Funds from the bankruptcy did not approach what was needed to remediate the site of lead contamination and the EPA began waste removal under the Superfund program in 2021.

According to the EPA, the long-term goals of NPL sites like the Exide site are to protect the land surrounding the sites from ground and water contamination, ameliorate the levels of contamination within the site, and ultimately return the land parcel to new usage.

According to EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz, "Finalizing this site to the National Priorities List is the best and quickest way to bring the necessary attention and resources to these areas."

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